Dr. George J. Hochmuth is a professor of Soil Fertility and Plant Nutrition in the Soil and Water Sciences Department, IFAS, University of Florida. After 32 years of a distinguished career with the UF, Dr. Hochmuth retired from active service. In recognition of his professional contributions, the SWSD is establishing an endowment from private donor funds to support the George J. Hochmuth Education Award. This fund provides a cash award to undergraduate or graduate students in Soil and Water Sciences or Environmental Management programs. In the 2021 award year, there will be one (1) $500 award for an undergraduate student and one (1) $1000 award for a graduate student. As the endowment income grows, award amount will be increased as returns on the fund increase.

What is the George J. Hochmuth Education Award?

The George J. Hochmuth Education Award is a student recognition award named in honor of Dr. George Hochmuth. The program provides an annual award to outstanding undergraduate or graduate students in educational programs in agriculture and environmental quality.

What would be required to establish this education enrichment award?

This award will be established with currently available donor funds and increased with future donations. Funds to support the scholarships are earned from this endowment. Contributions to the fund would be fully tax deductible.

How would the selection process work?

This award will be given once a year to one outstanding undergraduate and one outstanding graduate student. Qualified students must exhibit a significant interest in issues related to sustainable agricultural production and environmental management, focusing on improved soil and water quality. In addition to meeting academic excellence, preference will be given to students who demonstrate participation and leadership activities in clubs and other extracurricular activities related to improving agriculture efficiency and environmental quality.
About Dr. George J. Hochmuth

George Hochmuth was born in Baltimore, MD and grew up in Mardela Springs, MD on the Eastern Shore of MD. His family owned a dairy farm that was converted to a vegetable and grain farm in the 1950s. George’s early years revolved around activities associated with the farm, taking care of crops and operating farming equipment. During High School, George spent time in various sports teams and afterhours on the farm. These experiences instilled a desire to study horticulture and agriculture at the University of Maryland.

He received the BS degree in Horticulture from the University of Maryland in College Park, MD. During his undergraduate studies, he spent time during the semesters with the USDA vegetable research lab in Beltsville, MD and summers at the University of Maryland Vegetable Research farm, as well as his family’s farm. These experiences instilled a desire to attend graduate school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, WI, obtaining the PhD in Plant Breeding and Genetics, working on plant nutrition.

In 1980, George joined the faculty of the Plant and Soil Science Department of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. In 1984, he moved to the University of Florida to take a faculty position with the Vegetable Crops Department (now Horticultural Sciences Department). George served in several leadership roles from 1999 to 2009, including Center Director and Associate Dean for Research. George came to the SWSD in 2009 where he has carried out Research, Extension, and Teaching appointments.

Working with SWSD faculty colleagues, his early research dealt with soil test calibration and nutrient management with vegetables, developing the statewide fertilizer recommendations. He has studied nutrient management with nearly all major vegetable crops, many agronomic crops, and turfgrass. In addition to nutrient management, George has researched hydroponic crop production writing the current Extension recommendations for greenhouse crop production. Dr. Hochmuth has taught many courses at UF including a popular course on sustainable land management and he teaches an internet MOOC.

George was elected a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Sciences and has numerous awards including the Pioneer Award from the American Society for Plasticulture for pioneering research in the use of plastics in agriculture systems for efficient nutrient management. George is a recognized leader in nutrient management in the state of Florida as well as nationally and internationally. He is the co-author of a widely recognized book on vegetable production, Knott’s Handbook for Vegetable Growers.

He serves as a role model for researchers and educators and we are indeed fortunate to have a faculty member of such outstanding scientific caliber and performance.

George retired from UF in February 2016. He will continue to support the Department including teaching his Sustainability course in the short-term, serving on graduate committees, and assisting in other areas as needed by the Department.